

**AMENDED CLAIM SET:**

1. (currently amended) A method for inhibiting [[a]] degradation of brain natriuretic peptide (BNP) in a specimen, which comprises

collecting the specimen containing brain natriuretic peptide into a container, wherein a face of the container coming into contact with the specimen is made of or coated with a material selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics and wherein no protease inhibitor for inhibition of the degradation of natriuretic peptides is added to the specimen, and excluding an addition of any inhibiting agents which inhibit the degradation of brain natriuretic peptide,

by which the ratio of residual BNP immunoreactivity is 50% or more after 24 hours standing at 25°C.

2. (cancelled).

3. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said specimen is obtained from a human, dog, pig, rat or mouse.

4. (cancelled).

5. (cancelled).

6. (currently amended) A method for measuring mammalian brain natriuretic peptides in a specimen, which comprises:

collecting the specimen containing brain natriuretic peptides into a container, wherein a face of the container coming into contact with the specimen is made of or coated with a material selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics, ~~and excluding an addition of any inhibiting agents which inhibit a degradation of brain natriuretic peptide; and~~

measuring the mammalian natriuretic peptides by standard means,

wherein the ratio of residual BNP immunoreactivity is 50% or more after 24 hours standing at 25°C.

7. - 11. (cancelled).

12. (currently amended) A method for inhibiting [[a]] degradation of brain natriuretic peptide (BNP) in whole blood or blood plasma, which comprises

collecting the whole blood or blood plasma into a container, wherein a face of the container coming into contact with the whole blood or blood plasma is made of or coated with a material selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics, and excluding an addition of any inhibiting agents which inhibit the degradation of brain natriuretic peptide,

by which the ratio of residual BNP immunoreactivity is 50% or more after 24 hours standing at 25°C.

13. (currently amended) A method for inhibiting an activation of a substance degrading brain natriuretic peptide (BNP) in a specimen, which comprises

collecting the specimen containing brain natriuretic peptide into a container, wherein a face of the container coming into contact with the specimen is made of or coated with a material selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics and wherein no protease inhibitor for inhibition of the degradation of natriuretic peptides is added to the specimen, and excluding an addition of any inhibiting agents which inhibit a degradation of brain natriuretic peptide,

by which the ratio of residual BNP immunoreactivity is 50% or more after 24 hours standing at 25°C.